

fyi-request-34939-85728c84@requests.fyi.org.nz

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Ref: OIAD-9321

Tēnā koe Jeremy

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation, received on 23 June 2026, in which you stated and asked for:

[illegible]

*As such, I am requesting:*

1. *All correspondence, emails, text messages, instant messages (including via Teams, Slack, or similar platforms), file notes, memoranda, and any other records of communication (whether internal or external) relating to:*
  - a. *The development, design, or implementation of foreign visitor charges at any Department of Conservation site*
  - b. *The selection of Milford Sound, Aoraki Mount Cook, Mautohe Cathedral Cove, and the Tongariro Alpine Crossing as the initial sites for charges*
  - c. *The proposed charging model, including proposed fee amounts, exemption criteria, identification requirements, and enforcement mechanisms*
  - d. *Any discussions regarding the potential application of charges to New Zealand citizens or residents, or any consideration of ethnic profiling or other discriminatory application of charges*
  - e. *Engagement with the Minister of Conservation, the Human Rights Commission, the Minister's office, other Ministers, or Cabinet regarding these proposals*

2. *All records of meetings, relating to the foreign visitor charges proposal, including:*
  - a. *Meeting agendas, minutes, notes, and action items, briefing notes, speaking notes, and talking points prepared for or used in any meeting*
  - b. *All aide-memoires, briefings, reports, and information papers prepared for or provided to the Minister, the Minister's office, or senior officials*
3. *All policy papers, Cabinet papers, Cabinet committee papers, regulatory impact statements, options papers, discussion documents, issues papers, consultation documents, position papers, working papers relating to the foreign visitor charges proposal.*
4. *All advice, recommendations, reports, research, analysis, cost-benefit analyses, financial modelling, risk assessments, legal advice, and opinions (whether internal or external, and whether in draft or final form) relating to:*
  - a. *The feasibility, legality, or desirability of foreign visitor charges;*
  - b. *The potential revenue from such charges*
  - c. *The costs of implementation and enforcement*
  - d. *The potential impacts on visitor numbers, tourism, local communities, iwi, and conservation outcomes*
  - e. *Any human rights, discrimination, or privacy implications of the charges, including any consideration of identification requirements or differential treatment based on nationality, ethnicity, or residency*
5. *All records relating to decision-making, including:*
  - a. *Recommendations to the Minister or Cabinet*
  - b. *Decision records, minutes of decisions, and Cabinet minutes*
  - c. *Records of approvals or declinations*
  - d. *Any dissenting advice, alternative views, or minority reports relating to the foreign visitor charges.*
6. *All records relating to the implementation or operational planning of foreign visitor charges, including:*
  - a. *Implementation plans, project plans, timelines, and Gantt charts*
  - b. *Operational policies, standard operating procedures, and guidelines*
  - c. *System specifications, technical requirements, and procurement documents for any charging or identification system*
  - d. *Communications plans, media strategies, and public relations materials*
  - e. *Training materials and staff guidance*

*To ensure that the production of this material can be conducted efficiently, I am happy for this request to be significantly narrowed to only encompass material produced since the current regime took power on 27 November 2023. I request that the information be provided in electronic format, via email response/s to this request that will be logged by FYI. If any part of this request is refused, I ask that you consider whether parts of the documents or information can be released with appropriate redactions. “*

We have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

Before proceeding to the Department's response, we have provided some relevant contextual information and outlined our approach to your request.

### **Exploring charging for access to some public conservation land**

The work on this policy commenced during the current term of Government, and the date range that we have applied to this request therefore encompasses the full development of the workstream, to date.

Access charges are not yet in place, with legislative changes being progressed through the Conservation Amendment Bill needed before charging can occur.

### **Approach to request**

We noted your interests as outlined in your request.

When seeking to scope your request and determine the size of what all "*records of communication*" and/or "*records of meetings*" might look like, it was found that the Department potentially held over 800,000 items that would require review to determine if they were in fact within scope. Attempting to research, collate and consider the parts of your request that sought these types of records would amount to substantial collation and research, and accordingly, these parts of your request are refused under section 18(f) of the OIA. As an alternative, we have focused on providing only key documents with respect to the topics comprised in the six main parts of your request. This step aligns with section 16 of the OIA, which allows information to be made available in several ways in response to a request.

Information that has been proactively released and/or is available via the Department's website is considered publicly available. We have provided links to this information, but have not provided copies of any of the documents per section 18(d) of the OIA, as they are publicly available.

Where we note information is not held in our response, those parts of your request are refused under section 18(e) of the OIA, as the information does not exist.

### **Department's response**

Your request is comprised of six main parts. As outlined above, we have rescoped to focus on a key document-only approach with respect to topics canvassed, which has allowed us to provide a response to your request.

The period applicable to your request is 27 November 2023 to 23 June 2026 (being the date of your request). This is the period you advised agreement to in your request.

### **Parts 1, 2, 3 and 5**

The relevant policy papers have been proactively released on the Department's website, with appropriate redactions where required.

These are available here:

Cabinet material: Exploring charging for access to some public conservation land | <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/getting-involved/consultations/2024/access-charging/cabinet-material-exploring-charging-for-access-to-some-public-conservation-land.pdf>

and other associated links on this webpage:

Charging for access to some public conservation land | <https://www.doc.govt.nz/access-charging-consultation> – under ‘Supporting Cabinet papers and advice’.

The selection of initial sites is covered, and indicative fee amounts are included. The proposed charging model is presently under active consideration, thus this information is withheld in full under section 9(2)(f)(iv) of the OIA.

#### **Part 4**

We have publicly released some associated research on access charging, it is on the same webpage as that linked above.

In particular, we refer you to:

Financial sustainability review international comparison (Allen & Clarke) | <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/getting-involved/consultations/2024/access-charging/financial-sustainability-review-international-comparison.pdf>

and willingness to pay research here:

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/getting-involved/consultations/2024/access-charging/kantar-report-willingness-to-pay-access-charging.pdf> .

Indicative fee amounts are included in the Cabinet paper noted above and the proposed charging model is presently under active consideration.

#### **Part 6**

Implementation options are still being developed and considered. The Department is just starting the process for thinking about implementation, thus the types of documents referred to in this part of your request do not yet exist.

We are also currently undertaking targeted consultation on access charges to hear from communities at the four proposed sites, and considering what we need to think about for implementation.

The consultation document outlines a range of potential approaches to implementation and is available here:

Access charging for international visitors fact sheet including maps (PDF, 2,479K) | <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/getting-involved/consultations/2024/access-charging/access-charging-regulations-revenue-allocation-and-implementation-fact-sheet-with-maps.pdf>.

We are currently seeking input into these options, and would welcome your feedback. You can send it to this email address: [accesschargingconsultation@doc.govt.nz](mailto:accesschargingconsultation@doc.govt.nz).

In making my decision, and with respect to the withholding of information as advised within the Department's response, I have considered the public interest considerations in section 9(1) of the OIA and determined there are no public interests that outweigh the grounds for withholding.

You are entitled to seek an investigation and review of my decision by writing to an Ombudsman as provided by section 28(3) of the OIA.

Please note that this letter (with your personal details removed) may be published on the Department's website.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Johnson'.

James Johnson  
Manager, Budget and Funding Policy  
Department of Conservation | *Te Papa Atawhai*